

## WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report

### June 2005

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Welcome to the WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division Monthly Report. This month's report highlights the division's progress and milestones reached in these areas:

- Division News
  - Public Transportation
  - Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation
  - Sound Transit/WSDOT Projects
  - Passenger and Freight Rail
  - Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management
  - Upcoming Events
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### Division News

#### Office of Transit Mobility

The passage of Substitute House Bill 2124 called for the creation of the Office of Transit Mobility, located within the Public Transportation and Rail Division. The department is to play a guiding role in coordinating public transportation services, increasing connectivity between those services, advocating for public transportation to increase corridor efficiency, and increasing integration of public transportation and the highway system. The state received \$1.2 million of new funding for the creation of the office for the 2005–07 biennium, which includes three full-time equivalent (FTE) employees. An advisory committee comprised of transit agencies, cities and counties, and regional transportation planning organizations will be established to advise the Governor and WSDOT in program development.

#### Regional Mobility Grant Program

The Office of Transit Mobility will oversee the Regional Mobility Grant Program, a new grant program designed to fund public transportation efficiency projects. Funding for the grant program includes \$20 million in 2005–07 and is coupled with a \$30 million park and ride lot program identified in the department's Capital Projects Program. The Regional Mobility Grant Program will aid local governments in funding projects such as inter-county connectivity service, park and ride lots, rush hour transit service, and projects that improve connectivity and efficiency of the transportation system.

#### Program Milestones

Activity	Milestone	Date
Advisory Committee	Will meet on an ongoing basis	First meeting in June
Grant Technical Work Group	Will meet until grant criteria is established	First meeting in June
Initial grant criteria	Confirmed for first-year grants with applications available online	September 1, 2005
<b>Call for applications for efficiency projects</b>		<b>September 15, 2005</b>
<b>Grant applications due to WSDOT</b>		<b>November 1, 2005</b>
Prioritized applications and all submitted grants due to Legislature		December 1, 2005
Grants awarded following 2006 Legislature's selection		After January 1, 2006

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## Public Transportation

### WSDOT Awards \$50 Million in Public Transportation Grants

In May, WSDOT awarded \$50,081,221 in state and federal public transportation grants to support public transportation for people living in rural areas, people with disabilities, youth, seniors, and low-income residents. The state-funded portion, \$36.1 million, is provided from revenue identified in the 2003 Legislative Transportation Funding Package. "For those of you who rely on public transportation to get where you need to go, your future just got better," said Gov. Christine Gregoire after signing the transportation bill. "We're funding projects in almost every county to expand and improve public transportation."



WSDOT awarded \$27 million in competitive grants and \$23 million in formula-based grants for 2005–07 projects. The competitive grants, awarded for 100 projects, will help purchase a total of 130 new vehicles including 7 full-sized coaches, 58 minibuses, and 65 vans. The grants will also provide public transportation services in 36 counties across the state. State funds of \$13 million are matched with approximately \$14.1 million in federal grants provided by the Federal Transit Administration. The formula-based grants will help 25 transit systems provide additional service for people with special transportation needs and will help six transit systems improve transportation for people living in rural areas.

Grant recipients include public transit systems, non-profit agencies, tribal governments, senior centers, cities, counties, and other public transportation providers. For more information on the grant program and awards, please visit [www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit).

### Grant Management Training Sessions Scheduled



Staff of organizations receiving 2003 grants attend training.

In May, staff prepared guidebooks, reference guides, and presentation materials to assist public transportation grant recipients with managing their 2005–07 public transportation grants. WSDOT will host workshops in June and July in four locations:

- Spokane: Wednesday, July 13, 2005
- Yakima: Thursday, July 14, 2005
- Olympia: Tuesday, June 21, 2005
- SeaTac: Wednesday, June 22, 2005

Over 100 grant managers are expected to attend the workshops, which are mandatory for organizations awarded grants through the competitive program. At the training, WSDOT staff will help grantees understand and comply with the laws and regulations associated with Federal Transit Administration funding. Grantees will also learn best practices and expectations for managing state grants provided through the 2003 Legislative Transportation Funding Package.

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## Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation

### Walla Walla Intercity Bus Study is Underway

An intercity bus study funded by CTAA and ACCT is underway in Walla Walla. CTA-NW and the Blue Mountain Coordinated Transportation Coalition contracted with Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates to study intercity bus options in Walla Walla. The study will explore service alternatives and provide recommendations for:

- Developing new service to replace discontinued Greyhound service to/from Walla Walla;
- Improving intercity connectivity through new or enhanced public transportation services in the Blue Mountain area;
- Coordinating existing transportation services, and determining market feasibility of a private, for-profit service operating between Walla Walla and Pasco.

Staff from Valley Transit, the City of Walla Walla, Walla Walla County, WSDOT, and jurisdictions throughout the area will be involved in the study. The consultant also plans to hold a series of stakeholder interviews and a public workshop with residents.

### **People for People Kicks Offs Intercity Bus Study in Yakima**

Through a Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) grant matched with funding provided by the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT), the Community Transportation Association of the Northwest (CTA-NW) and People for People hired



a consulting firm to conduct an intercity bus study in Yakima. In May, Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates held a kick off meeting with People for People and the Yakima Special Needs Transportation Coalition. Participants in the meeting expressed concern about availability of service between communities within Yakima County. In particular, the strong agricultural economy is increasing the need for travel between Yakima and Toppenish, Sunnyside, Wapato and other small communities. Workers need to travel from affordable housing in Yakima to job sites while workers living in

smaller communities need to get into Yakima for services. The study will address these issues and develop a strategy for intercity rural transportation services, fixed-route service design, finance and implementation.

### **Staff Continues to Meet with Transportation Providers for Statewide Trip Planner**

In May, ACCT staff met with several public transit systems to discuss the Statewide Trip Planner project. Transit agencies are excited about getting started on the project and are pleased that WSDOT is taking the lead on this project that will benefit their customers and streamline communications with our division. Transit providers are also interested in the ability to use the Statewide Trip Planner data for creating their own timetables and schedules. Presentations were made to the following transit systems:

- |                                    |                                    |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ▪ Pacific Transit                  | ▪ Pierce Transit                   |
| ▪ Jefferson Transit Authority      | ▪ Everett Transit                  |
| ▪ Clallam Transit System           | ▪ Island Transit                   |
| ▪ Spokane Transit Authority        | ▪ Whatcom Transportation Authority |
| ▪ Pullman Transit                  | ▪ Asotin Transit                   |
| ▪ CUBS (Cowlitz Transit Authority) | ▪ Twin Transit                     |
| ▪ Skagit Transit                   |                                    |

The Statewide Trip Planner is a joint Washington and Oregon project to share on-line travel information for different modes of transportation throughout the state including intercity bus, rail, and local transit. Individual transportation provider websites will be accessible through the system as early as December 2005 and the first phase of the trip planner will be completed in the spring of 2006.

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### **Sound Transit/WSDOT Projects**

#### **Commuter Rail Program**

*Sounder* commuter rail service between Everett, Edmonds and Seattle doubles on Monday, June 6th. Sound Transit will add a second weekday commuter train on the route giving patrons an

opportunity for earlier travel into Seattle in the morning and an earlier return in the afternoon. Coupled with the Rail Plus program that allows Sounder pass holders to also use Amtrak *Cascades* trains between Everett, Edmonds and Seattle, weekday passengers will now have the option of early morning, late morning and late evening southbound trains and early morning and late afternoon departures northbound. Sound Transit plans to add two additional round trips between Everett and Seattle, and open a new station stop in Mukilteo for all *Sounder* trains by late 2007.

### **Link Light Rail**

Link light rail is now under construction on the entire 14-mile initial segment between 154<sup>th</sup> Street in Tukwila and Westlake Station in downtown Seattle. The last of several major construction contracts was awarded earlier this year for the section between the south end of Martin Luther King Boulevard (South Boeing Access Road exit on I-5) in Seattle and 154<sup>th</sup> Street in Tukwila. Most of this section is being constructed within or adjacent to WSDOT right-of-way underneath or adjacent to I-5, SR 599 and SR 518. Track work connecting the south end of the downtown Seattle bus/light rail tunnel with the currently under-construction maintenance facility on Airport Way, and the Royal Brougham and Lander Street stations, will be completed by November 2005. This section will be used to test the first light rail vehicles beginning in late 2006. The entire initial segment is expected to be operational in mid-2009.

Sound Transit is also proceeding with design work to extend light rail south from 154<sup>th</sup> Street to a planned new terminal at SeaTac International Airport. The airport station will be located on International Boulevard near the northeast corner of the existing airport parking garage, approximately 1,200 feet from the main airline terminal complex. The target date for completion of the 1.7-mile airport extension is late 2009.

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## **Passenger and Freight Rail**

### **Ruston Way Crossover Tracks Completed**

On May 6, trains began using new crossover tracks at Ruston Way in north Tacoma. Crossover tracks are a set of turnouts connecting multiple tracks that allow trains to move from one track to another. Before the crossover tracks were built, passenger trains could be delayed as long as 15 minutes while they waited for freight trains to pass near Ruston Way in north Tacoma. The new set of crossover tracks at Ruston Way allows faster Amtrak trains to move around slower freight trains, at speeds up to 60 mph. BNSF Railway Company began earthwork construction in August 2004. The track and signal system construction began in December 2004, after the earthwork was completed. The project was funded using \$3.4 million in funds allocated by the 2001 legislature.

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## **Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management**

### **April Public Awareness Campaigns**



Each spring and fall WSDOT participates in statewide public awareness campaigns to increase the use of commute options other than driving alone. WSDOT supports the campaigns by purchasing a small amount of paid radio advertising and by developing promotions with private partners.

In April, two McDonald's franchises participated as partners for the first time by hosting two radio promotions in Seattle and six in Spokane. In Spokane, Motion Auto hosted successful promotional events emphasizing air quality. In other partnerships, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* donated four half-page display ads and Amtrak *Cascades* donated train tickets.

The spring ridesharing campaigns attracted an estimated 20,000 participants, a decrease of about 13 percent from the 2004 spring campaign. The decrease in participation may be the result of overlapping promotional campaign for vanpooling and RideshareOnline.com. In addition,

employee transportation coordinators at CTR worksites—the primary participants in the campaigns—had a competing obligation to conduct biennial CTR surveys. One thousand of the state's largest businesses participate in the campaigns, with the highest participation along the I-5 corridor.

### **Public Awareness Campaign Focuses on Increasing Vanpool Ridership**

To assist customers and operators in developing new vanpools or finding riders for existing vanpools, WSDOT and the transit systems with vanpool programs mounted a public awareness campaign in February and March. Entitled "[Freewheeling. Vanpooling is your trip, your way.](#)," the campaign included outdoor billboards, radio spots, transit advertising, and printed materials.



Vanpool operators, led by Pierce Transit, developed the campaign.

The campaign directed people to [RideshareOnline.com](http://RideshareOnline.com) to find vanpools or to reach local transit systems for help. In coordination with the Freewheeling campaign, RideshareOnline.com—King County's Metro's existing web-based, interactive service—expanded statewide. A second wave of "Freewheeling" advertising is planned for the fall of 2005.

### **Vanpool Program Is Growing**

The goal of the vanpool grant program is to double vanpooling in ten years. WSDOT and transit agencies set an interim goal of increasing vanpooling by ten percent over the 2003–05 biennium, or by 160 operating vehicles statewide. The program is on track to exceed this goal. Between July 2003 and February 2005 the number of vanpools on the road in Washington State increased by nearly 10 percent to 1,742 vehicles. In the same time-period, the number of commuters arriving to work in vanpools statewide increased by over 12 percent to almost 14,300 daily riders.

Originally funded at \$4 million for the 2003–05 biennium, the 2005 legislature has provided \$5 million for the 2005–07 biennium. The statewide program focuses on congested corridors and areas where opportunities for providing roadway capacity are limited or expensive.

### **WSDOT Plans Second Round of CTR Performance Grants**

The [Performance Grant Program](#) has been funded at \$1.5 million for the 2005–07 biennium. WSDOT plans to request proposals for 2005–07 CTR Performance Grants in the August/September timeframe. Upcoming conferences and workshops will offer information on changes to the program and will explain the proposal process for 2005–07 grant cycle.

The legislature created the program in 2003 to encourage the development of transportation services that result in fewer vehicle trips arriving at worksites. The program fosters innovation by paying for trips reduced and by reimbursing start-up costs for each grantee's project—up to fifty percent of the awarded funds. The balance of awarded funds will be distributed based on performance, as documented in before and after surveys of vehicle trips.

As the 2003–05 grant cycle closes, WSDOT is finding success stories among the first round of grantees. In one innovative project, Unico Properties has persuaded businesses in a downtown Seattle building to purchase transit passes for employees and to become members of the Flexcar car-sharing service. Spokane County has also succeeded with new marketing tools that emphasize the sound business reasons to participate in trip reduction programs. The county has used the marketing tools to persuade property managers and business groups to voluntarily reduce vehicle trips to the worksite.



WSDOT has also identified areas for improvement in the Performance Grant Program. Robin Hartsell, CTR Administrator, is reviewing the existing program and will coordinate with the CTR Task Force and current grant recipients on improvements prior to the next call for proposals.

### **CTR Task Force Committee Examines Program Scope and Structure**

A Commute Trip Reduction Task Force committee has begun reviewing the program's scope and structure. The committee has analyzed statewide data on congestion, travel, and air quality to determine if different areas and employers around the state should be affected. The committee presented its preliminary recommendations to the Task Force on May 26. Those recommendations include:

- Continue the CTR program and demonstrate its value; examine its parameters and modify as needed to improve the program's effectiveness.
- Focus CTR on the morning commute, using morning peak-period congestion on state highways as an indicator for areas to be affected.
- Define affected areas in terms of urban growth areas containing state highways above a certain threshold of morning congestion; review list of affected areas every four years.

Work on program scope and structure will continue throughout the summer and fall. The committee will also be looking at the program's administration, governance, and funding. The Task Force will evaluate the committee's work and form recommendations for a report to the legislature due December 1. The Task Force is refining its work plan in preparation for the report; another committee may form to work on issues related to program measurement and evaluation.

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### **Upcoming Events**

#### **Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation Meetings**

June 3, August 5, October 7, and December 2

9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

WSDOT's Headquarters Building, Commission Boardroom, Olympia

[www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct\\_meetings.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct_meetings.htm)

#### **Association of Travel Instruction (ATI) Conference**

Friday, August 12, 2005–Sunday, August 14, 2005

Seattle, Washington

For more information visit [www.travelinstruction.org](http://www.travelinstruction.org)

#### **CTR Task Force Meetings**

June 24 and July 22, 11 am–2 pm, preceded by committee meetings. To confirm times and locations, contact Shelley Pedro at [pedros@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:pedros@wsdot.wa.gov) or (360) 705-7846.

#### **29th Annual Washington State Public Transportation Conference**

August 22–24, 2005

Double Tree Hotel Seattle Airport

SeaTac

[www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference)

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The WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Division prepares this monthly newsletter as a service to those interested in the activities of the division and its partners within the agency. To receive your own copy via e-mail or for questions regarding newsletter articles, please contact Tonia Buell, communications manager, at 360-705-7439 or [buellt@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:buellt@wsdot.wa.gov).